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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 001622

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SUBJECT: ARAB IRANIAN COMMUNITY IN KUWAIT CONCERNED ABOUT GROWING IRANIAN PRESSURE, WELCOMES U.S. FORCES

Classified By: DCM Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On May 6, Poloff met with five activists from the Arab Iranian (Ahwazi) expatriate community in Kuwait at their request: Adulkhaligh Delavi, Sabah Haidary, Atiya Savari, Naji Sawaeidy, and Hosain Ahwazy, who currently lives in London. (Comment: Poloff was in a listening mode and did not comment on their requests for support or their suggestions that U.S. forces would be welcomed in the Ahwaz region of Iran. End comment.) According to Delavi, Ahwazis account for "60-65% of the 50,000-60,000 Iranians living in Kuwait," the largest Ahwazi community outside Iran. Delavi said he and other Ahwazi activists raised substantial money in Kuwait to support Ahwazi organizations operating inside Iran with "the full knowledge of the GOK"; he did not specify which organizations they supported. Ahwazis in Kuwait also provide material aid and legal assistance to families of jailed Ahwazis in Iran, and assist in distributing information on their persecution. Delavi admitted that some Ahwazi organizations supported violent resistance against the Iranian regime, but stressed that he and the other activists did not.

Growing Iranian Pressure

¶2. (C) Since last year, the Iranian government has increasingly cracked down on Ahwazi opposition groups and their supporters, Delavi alleged. Describing the worsening situation of Ahwazis living in Iran, Delavi said they were forced to choose Persian names and send their children to schools taught in Farsi, and were subject to resettlement. According to Delavi and Ahwazy, approximately 200,000 Ahwazis had been moved out of an area along the Iranian bank of the Shatt Al-Arab waterway by authorities, allegedly to make room for a planned "industrial zone." Delavi added that the GOI was also resettling ethnic Persians among Ahwazis, apparently in an attempt to shift the demography of the area.

¶3. (C) Delavi claimed Mohammed Baqer Thu Al-Qader, the Undersecretary for Security at the Iranian Ministry of Interior, pressured the GOK to stop Ahwazis living in Kuwait from sending assistance to Ahwazi organizations in Iran during his visit to Kuwait in March. Delavi and Ahwazy said they hoped the USG would convince the GOK that the Ahwazi community in Kuwait was not a threat. They were particularly concerned that the memorandum of understanding signed between Kuwait and Iran during Al-Qader's visit would lead to the arrest and deportation of Ahwazi activists in Kuwait. They also worried that the GOK might try to use Ahwazi activists as a bargaining chip with the GOI, agreeing to deport them as part of a deal with the Iranians. "We are not the bad guys. We are on your side," they stressed.

"National Federalism" or Separate Nation?

¶ 14. (C) Delavi and Ahwazy said their ultimate goal was the creation of a "secular, democratic, and federal" government in Iran based on ethnic nationalities and geography. (Note: At one point, Ahwazy corrected Poloff's reference to the Ahwazi in Iran as a "community," saying, "No, it is the Ahwazi nation in Iran. There is an Ahwazy community in Kuwait." End note.) "Iran is composed of multiple nations," Ahwazy explained, adding that Iran's different ethnic groups had recently joined to form the "Iranian Federal Congress (IFC)," whose website (www.iranfederal.org/eng/report/eng.html) lists "the Democratic Solidarity Party of Ahwaz" as one of the seven groups participating in the IFC.

¶ 15. (C) The Ahwazi activists were at times annoyed and impatient with U.S. policy towards Iran. Davali questioned whether U.S. officials were even aware Iran had ethnic minorities. He also criticized the Voice of America (VOA) for broadcasting only in Farsi and for not reporting on human rights violations against Iran's ethnic minorities. Davali added that the director of the VOA's Farsi broadcasts was "the biggest Persian Nazi I know." Highlighting oil and gas resources in the Ahwaz area, Ahwazy suggested U.S. forces invading from Iraq could easily cut it off from the government in Tehran. Davali noted that Ahwazis in Iran were learning English to be able to welcome U.S. troops.

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